

PRESS RELEASE

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY



S. KIMBERLY BELSHÉ
SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 28, 2006

CONTACT: Tony Cava
(916) 654-3304

SCHWARZENEGGER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS LEAD ROUNDTABLE TO DISCUSS INVESTMENTS TO EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

ALAMEDA – Officials from the Schwarzenegger Administration today joined Alameda County officials at Alameda Alliance for Health to discuss investments to increase access to health care and enrollment in the Healthy Families Program and Medi-Cal. Alameda Alliance for Health administers the Healthy Families Program in Alameda County.

Children's health coverage remains a top priority for Governor Schwarzenegger. Currently, 95 percent of eligible children are enrolled in Medi-Cal and 90 percent of eligible children are enrolled in Healthy Families. Together, these programs serve more than four million children. Approximately 428,000 uninsured children, more than half of all uninsured children in California, are eligible for free or low-cost health care coverage. In Alameda County alone, approximately 12,000 uninsured children are eligible for Healthy Families or Medi-Cal.

"Healthy Families and Medi-Cal are a critical part of our health care system. These programs help children and teenagers get the medical, dental and vision care services they need," said California Department of Health Services Director Sandra Shewry. "California has had tremendous success with enrolling children in state health coverage programs, but we must continue our efforts. Governor Schwarzenegger is committed to reaching the remaining children who are eligible for state programs, but not enrolled."

Under the Governor's leadership, enrollment in Healthy Families has increased by 11.7 percent. Despite inherited budget deficits, the Governor consistently protected access and eligibility for the more than seven million at-risk Californians who rely on Medi-Cal and Healthy Families for health coverage. Last year's budget restored \$15 million for outreach and enrollment activities for health coverage programs that had been eliminated by the prior Administration. The Governor also secured federal support for an innovative program that allowed four Bay Area counties to use federal matching funds with county funds to enroll 3,000 middle-income children in Healthy Families.

The Governor this week also convened a Summit on Health Care Affordability, opening the dialogue between diverse interests about health care costs. The Governor brought together for the first time experts from various fields, such as academics, government, business, health care and labor, to discuss California's health care cost and coverage challenges.

"We are all after the same goal, a first-rate health care system that is accessible to everyone, efficient and affordable," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "The spiraling cost of health care is nearing the crisis point - not just in California, but across the nation. We must find ways to lower the cost of health care. We cannot continue as we have. Without fundamental changes in the system, coverage will become even less affordable for workers and employers. Affordability is the key to quality, access and coverage."

-more-

Agency
Departments &
Boards:

Aging

Alcohol and
Drug Programs

Child Support
Services

Community Services
and Development

Developmental
Services

Emergency Medical
Services Authority

Health Services

Managed Risk
Medical Insurance

Mental Health

Rehabilitation

Social Services

Statewide Health
Planning and
Development

Governor's Efforts to Expand Access to Health Care

The Governor announced at the summit his intent to develop a plan to expand school-based health clinics to 500 elementary schools.

On July 22, the Governor called for legislation to increase the affordability of lifesaving medications. The California Discount Drug Initiative will provide access to up to 40 percent savings on brand name and up to 60 percent savings on generic prescription drugs to:

- Uninsured Californians with incomes below 300 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Californians with significant un-reimbursed medical expenses and incomes that fall below the state median family income.
- Eligible seniors whose drugs are not covered by Medicare, upon federal approval.

The Governor's 2006-07 budget provides more than \$80 million for outreach and enrollment activities targeting uninsured children who are eligible for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, but are not enrolled:

- \$22.6 million to counties for outreach and enrollment activities.
- \$9.6 million for increased staff and caseload resulting from the simplification of the enrollment process of children into Healthy Families.
- \$2.2 million in incentive payments to encourage Certified Application Assistants to help enroll more children into Medi-Cal and Healthy Families.
- \$48.2 million for caseload growth as a result of simplifying the Medi-Cal re-determination form to decrease turnover within the program.

The Governor's actions on health care also include:

- Signing legislation authorizing California to draw down \$540 million in new federal funding to provide greater access to health care for the uninsured.
- Signing an executive order outlining a statewide plan to advance health information technology.
- Appointing a new director of the Office of Patient Advocate.

###